



BEST OF THE WEST

No. 9

THE 9th BIG ISSUE OF-

BEST OF THE WEST



TIM HOLT



KIDNAPPED BY THE PLETTY WOMAN KNOWN ONLY AS THE WILDCAT, REDMASK IS FORCED TO PLAN HER ROBBERIES IF HE ESCAPES OR FAILS TO PLAN A PERFECT THEFT, INNOCENT PEOPLE WILL DIE! WHAT CAN THE CORBON CRIME-FIGHTER DO, WHEN HE FINDS HIMSELF HELP-LESS AND TRAPPED IN CHAINS IN—

"THE LAIR of the WILDCAT!"

AS REDMASK GALLOPS THE ROAN STALLION, SUN DANCE, ACROSS THE PLAINS, A ROPE DROPS FROM A CLIFF OVER HIS HEAD—





Gnnngs!

WHEN REDMASK OPENS HIS EYES—



ABOUT
TIME YOU
WAKE
UP! I'VE
GOT A
JOB
FOR YOU,
REDMASK...

OTHER OUTLAWS DEPEND
ON THEIR OWN BRAINS TO
PULL JOBS, BUT I'VE
A BETTER PLAN! I'M
GONNA USE YOUR
BRAINS TO PLAN ROBBERIES
FOR ME! REFUSE, AND
SOMEONE IN THE TOWN
OF BULLET WILL BE
KILLED EACH DAY—
UNTIL YOU AGREE!



WHAT CAN I
SAFELY DO
ANYTHING TO
PREVENT YOUR
BAND FROM
HURTING INNOCENT
PEOPLE? I'LL
PLAN YOUR
ROBBERIES FOR
YOU...

YOU'RE
BEING SMART,
REDMASK. REAL
SMART!

FREED FROM HIS PAINFUL POSITION, BUT UNDER THE WATCHFUL GUNS OF THE WILDCAT'S GANG, REDMASK PLANS A CRIME...



THE EXPRESS TRAIN STOPS AT
NEEDLE GAP FOR WATER. HIDE
BEHIND THE BUSHES UNTIL THE
STOPS. DYNAMITE WILL OPEN
THE BAGGAGE CAR DOORS. GO IN
AND GET THE GOLD. DO IT
FAST AND YOU'LL GET AWAY
BEFORE ANYBODY SUSPECTS
A THING!



IT SEEMS FOOLPROOF,
BUT IF IT ISN'T—SOMEBODY'S
GONNA DIE!

I DON'T
TRUST HIM.
I SAY KILL
HIM NOW!



LEFT ALONE IN THE OUTLAW CAVE, REDMASK HANDS HELPLESS, HIS WRISTS MANACLED, HIS BOOTED FEET ROPED TOGETHER.



THE HEAT FROM THE OIL LAMP CHIMNEY SETS
THE KEROSENE ROPES ABLAZE—



THEN, SWINGING GENTLY, REDWICK DRAWS A SPRINT INTO
THE WOODEN TABLETOP, DRAWING IT CLOSER...



A MOMENT LATER, THE MANAILES
HANDLE SWIFTY...

I'LL BORROW
BACK MY
COLT, AND THEN
GET TO
NEEDLE GAP
BY A SHORT-CUT!



AS THE UNION PACIFIC EXPRESS
CRUGS UP THE LONG SLOW
GRADE NEAR NEEDLE GAP,
REDWICK SWINGS ABOARD—



THE WATER
TOWER WHERE
THE WILDCAT
AND HER GANG
ARE HIDDEN IS
AT THE TOP OF
THE SLOPE...

NOW TO BRING
MY LEGS UP
TO MY HAND
SO I CAN
REACH THE
KEL...



I'LL REMOVE THE
COUPLING PIN THAT
HOLDS THE BAGGAGE
CAR AND CABOOSE
TO THE REST OF
THE TRAIN—



THE BAGGAGE CAR AND
CABOOSE WILL ROLL
DOWNWARD AT A SLOW
SPEED. NO ONE WILL BE
HURT—BUT THE GOLD
IN THE BAGGAGE CAR
WILL BE WHEELED AWAY
WHEN THE WILDCAT TRIES
TO GET IT...







AND SO, AS THE WILDCAT PLUNGED HEADLONG INTO THE WULFET BARR, HALF A DOZEN ROPES DROP FROM THE ROOF-TOPS...

ARMS PINNED TO THEIR SIDES, THE WILDCAT'S LOOKOUTS ARE STUNNED, ONE BY ONE—





HER BOOT TOE CATCHING IN A
RIPPED BOARD PLANKING, THE
WILDCAT SPREADS—



THE COMANCHE KID REACHES
OUT FOR THE SMOKE, A GRIN
SMILE TWISTING HIS LIPS—



THE WILDCAT WHIRLS! HER GUN COMES UP! AND
THEN—



STRAIGHT ARROW

THE HUNTER ON THE SHORE
LAUGHED ... AND HELPLESS IN THE
QUICK SAND STRAIGHT ARROW KNEW
THAT THE CHASE HAD ENDED AND
"ONLY CERTAIN DEATH AWAITED HIM—
FOR HE WAS—

"THE HUNTED!"

WHEN STRAIGHT ARROW RETURNS TO HIS TRIBE
ONE DAY, HE FINDS THEM IN DEEP MOORNING...

THREE BRAVES WENT
HUNTING AT NIGHT INLAND,
BUT, FAR FROM SHORE...

"TWO RETURNED, DRIFTING
TO SHORE, A GOLDEN BULLET
IN EACH ONE'S HEART.
THE THIRD WARRIOR,
BURNING FEATHER
HAD NOT COME BACK—"







OHEN TOO
HEAVY.
BUT HE
LOOKS
NO
ONE
THERE!

THE SUN'S
SETTING. WE'LL
TRY THE NORTH
END WHILE
THERE'S STILL
LIGHT. THE QUICK
SAND THERE
MAY HAVE
ROBBED ME OF
A SHOT!

THAT NIGHT...

DOGS! I CANNOT ATTEMPT
TO RESCUE BURNING FEATHER.
MY ONLY HOPE TO SAVE US
BOTH IS THAT THE HUNTER
WILL KEEP HIS WORD AND
I CAN OUTWIT HIM ALL
DAY TOMORROW.



SWIM...

HE'S CUNNING. I CANNOT TRY
TO HIDE IN THE WATER—THE
DOGS WOULD RAISE THE ALARM
BEFORE I COULD CROSS
THE BEACH!

IN THE DEADLY GAME
OF CAT AND MOUSE,
STRAIGHT ARROW
BACKTRACKS,
CIRCLES AND
CONTINUES TO ELUDE
HIS
RELENTLESS
PURSUERS...

THEY'VE LOST MY
TRACKS AGAIN AND
THEY'RE ARGUING. THEIR
TEMPERS MUST BE
GETTING SHORT.
NOW IS THE TIME
TO TRAP THE
HUNTER
WHILE HE
SHOWS
CARELESS...



WITH THE SHARP
HUNTING KNIFE,
STRAIGHT ARROW
PREPARES A
DEADLY
TRAP...

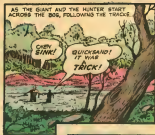
I'LL LEAVE A CLEAR TRAIL BEYOND
HERE. WHEN THE HUNTER IS CAUGHT,
HE'LL BE TOO DILIGENT TO
CONTINUE
THE CHASE.

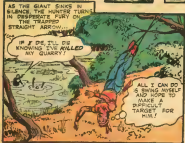


AIEEE!

THE TRAP WORKED
BUT THE CRY
SOUNDED AS IF
THE GANY
WERE CAUGHT
AND NOT
THE HUNTER...









IN THE TOWN OF BLUE FORK, SOME FOLKS ANXIOUSLY AWAIT THE ARRIVAL OF THE NOON TRAIN...



BUT BLAKE AND HIS BOYS ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES SELLING HELP ON THAT NOON TRAIN!



ON THE TRAIN SPEEDING TO BLUE FORK.



DEAD-SHOT JONES!
I THOUGHT IT WAS YOU!
REACH, HOMER!

REACH YOURSELF,
MARSHAL! NOBODY
GETS THUNDER ON ME!



YUH!

YOU GOT THE DROP
ALL RIGHT, HISTER -
BUT IT'S DROGSY!



TOUGH LIFE,
ISNT IT?

BEAUTIFUL!

SHAME!



THEY SHORE WUZ A GREAT
PIECE OF WORK, HISTER. DEAD-
SHOT'S A DANGEROUS HOMER AN'
I BEEN TRAILIN' HIM A LONG
TIME, THANKS.

FORGET IT, MARSHAL - HEY,
HERE'S MY STOP
SO LONG!



THEY HOMER
MUST BE
DEAD-SHOT
BOSS.

RIGHT/HE'S THE
ONLY ONE GETTIN'
OFF. HE'S A COOL-
LOOKIN' CUSTOMER.
ALL RIGHT.



HOWDY,
DEAD-
SHOT -
I'M
BLAME!

WE'RE
SHORE
GLAD TUN
HEST YUH
DEAD-
SHOT!

YEP TIAN BOSS HERE'S
BEEN TELLIN' US
PLENTY ABOUT YUH.
GOSH, YUH'RE WANTED
BY TIGH LAW IN EVEN
HERE STATES THAN I
AM - AN' THAT'S
SOMETHIN'!



OH-OH, I
THINK I
UNDER-
STAND.

YOUR BOYS
TALK TOO
MUCH BLAME
AND TOO
LOUD-THAT'S
GET TO STOP! LET'S GO
WHERE HE CAN TALK
BUSKUS IN
PRIVATE!

TRIM ER
I GUESS
YUH'RE
RIGHT.
DEAD-SHOT
SEE HIM
I TOLD
YUH HE
WUZ SMART!

WAL, I'LL BE
HORN-ROGGOLED.
YOUR GREAT AN-
SOLD FOR
BEEF?

SO THAT'S YOUR OLD PAL / HE'S
SIDED UP WITH BLAKE / LOOKS LIKE
YOUR GREAT FRIEND WILL RIDE
GUN WITH ANYBODY WHO PAYS
HIM MORE MONEY, DAD!



IF I EVER GIT NEAR
THAT TURNCOAT STEVE
BRAND, I'LL AXIL THIN
TRAITOR!

IT LOOKS LIKE
WE'LL HAVE TO FIGHT
IT OUT TO THE END
DAD - AUGH!



THAT VERY NIGHT / OUTSIDE MASTER'S RANCH.

TOO LATE! THIN
LONDOWN RUSTLERS
TOOK OFF THIN LAST
OF OUR BEEF!

IT WAS BLAKE'S MEN,
ALL RIGHT - AND YOUR
PAL, STEVE BRAND, WAS
LEADING THEM!



THE RUSTLERS AND OTHER CHARGES, TOO.

LAY OFF THE SHOOTING, BOYS!
THEY'LL NEVER OUCH UP TO US!
WE SCARED OFF THEIR HORSES!
MOVE AWAY!

RIGHT, DEAD-
SHOT / YUM
SHORE WORKED
THIS SMART!



LATER THAT NIGHT
OUTSIDE BOX CANYON.

WELL, DEAD-SHOT, IF
THERE WAS ANY DOUBT
IN MY MIND, THERE

SHORE AINT ANYMORE - NOT AFTER TONIGHT!
WOW! I NEVER DID SEE
SUCH RUSTLIN' / WE'RE
GONNA BE RICH!

WE GOT A THOUSAND
HEAD O' BEEF IN THAT
BOX CANYON.



FOUR OF YOU GUYS STICK HERE IN THE BOX
CANYON AND KEEP GUARD ON THAT BEEF.
COME ON, DEAD-SHOT - WE'RE GOIN' BACK TO
CELEBRATE - AND DO SOME PLANNIN'!



7 DAWN THE NEXT MORNING...AT A HORSEOUT NOT FAR FROM BOX CANYON.



LOOKING FOR ME ?
STEVE / I GOT RAIDER
HIRE AN YORE DURANGO
SETUP, TOO / WE ALL GOT
OFF THIS TRAIN AT THIS
LAST STOP. WHUT'S
UP ?



YOU'LL FIND OUT WHAT'S UP SOON ENOUGH. JUST FOLLOW ME NOW-- AND BRING plenty of ROPE / FIRST THING I'M TAKING CARE OF IS FOUR OMLHOOTS GUARDING RUSTLED CATTLE IN A BOX CANYON /



8 HALF HOUR LATER...IN THE BOX CANYON...



9 FEW MOMENTS LATER... RIGHT / I'LL KEEP THESE HORRE'S ON ICE-- READY FOR WHENEVER YUH WANT 'EM.

OHMY, MULEY, IT'S YOUR PARTY FROM NOW ON. I'VE GOT MORE WORK TO DO.



"TWO DAYS LATER, THE PETERS RANCH IS PUT UP FOR PUBLIC AUCTION..."

ALL RIGHT, GENTS - WHAT AM I BID FOR THIS FINE RANCH? DO I HEAR \$4000? \$5000? HOW ABOUT \$4000...?

WATCH THIS, DEAD SHOT - NOBODY'LL GAVE BID AGAINST ME!

I BID \$4000!

I'LL RAISE THAT, RICKMETER! MY BID'S \$5000!

HEY, WHAT'S THE DEAL, DEAD-SHOT? WHY, YOU DOUBLE-CROSSER! MAKE MY BID SIX THOUSAND!

I'LL RAISE THAT AGAIN! SEVEN THOUSAND!

I'LL GET YOU, DEAD-SHOT! MAKE HIM SWEAT HIS MONEY, AUCTIONEER!



ALL RIGHT, MISTER...LET'S SEE YOUR MONEY!

GLAD TO OBLIGE / TWEE-E-E E-E-E...



IN ANSWER TO STEVE'S WHISTLE, A STRANGE CHARIOT COMES INTO VIEW.

ALL RIGHT, BOYS - MOVE ALONG!

IT'S MY BOYS - THE DEAD SHOT'S DISAPPEARED!

THERE YOU ARE - JUST AS GOOD AS DEAD! EVERYONE OF THOSE MEN HAS A REWARD ON HIS HEAD / COUNT'EN TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS WORTH OF OUTLAWS!



GOOD WORK, I'LL TAKE OVER THESE OMLHOOTS!

THEN SLAP IRONS ON THAT HORSE, TOO! SHERIFF - THAT'S DEAD-SHOT JONES AND HE'S WANTED FOR MURDER!



WRONG, BLAKE, THIS IS STEVE BRAND, DEPUTY MARSHAL. DEAD-SHOT JONES IS IN JAIL IN THE NEXT TOWN - STEVE HELPED CATCH HIM!

AND WHAT'S MORE, BLAKE - I'M SWEARING OUT A WARRANT FOR YOU! FOR KIDNAPING AND HARBORING CRIMINALS!





GHOST RIDER

the

SPOOKS ARE SPOOKED!
EERIE SPIRITS RIDE THE
HAUNTED TRAILS OF
MURDER! AND GHOST
MEETS GHOST WHEN
THE GHOST RIDER
TANGLES WITH

THE GHOST STAGE COACH!



A STAGECOACH
ROLLS ALONG THE
CLIFF TRAIL TO
COYOTE FLATS...

TARNATION—IT'S GITTIN'
DARK AN' WE'RE STILL ON
THUH CLIFF ROAD! SHORE
WISH WE WAS PAST THUH
HAUNTED VILLAGE AFORE
NIGHT SETS IN!

THE
HAUNTED
VILLAGE
IS!



YUP—THAR SHE IS! AINT NOBODY GOT
THUH GUMPTION TUN GO NEAR THET OLD
PUEBLO VILLAGE. COME DARK AN' THAR'S
ALL KINDS O' MOANIN' AN' GROANIN' SON'
ON THAR *face* SIDDAP!



SUDDENLY!

WH-WH-WHAT?—?

—WHS—

—THAT?



AND THEN—AN EERIE GLOB OF LIGHT SOARS UP
FROM THE SIDE OF THE ROAD!



THE TERRIFIED HORSES FOUND DOWN THE DANGEROUS ROAD — COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL!



HYAR! WHOA!
PULL UP, THAR!
I WANNA GET OUTA
HYAR RAST, TOO —
BUT NOT THAT
FAST!

STOP THEM —
OR — WE'LL — SO
— OVER —!



NEXT
DAY —

TERRIBLE!
TERRIBLE!
NUTHIN' LEFT
ALIVE!

I CAN'T FIGGER
IT — OLD DRIVER
RAFE MADE THIS
TRIP HUNDREDS
O' TIMES AN' THEM
MOSSES KNEW
THUH ROAD, TOO!



LAST NIGHT WUZ
THUH NIGHT O' THUH
FULL MOON! GENTS,
THUH HAUNTED
VILLAGE TOOK
ANOTHER VICTIM!

NAH — IT WUZ JUST
AN ACCIDENT —
THAT'S ALL...

I
THINK...



A MONTH PASSES.
ONCE AGAIN, IT IS
THE NIGHT OF THE
FULL MOON...

GOLLY — I FERGOT!
HYAR IT'S THUH NIGHT
O' THUH FULL MOON AN'
I'M STUCK ON THE
ROAD — AHEAD O'
THUH HAUNTED
VILLAGE! AN' IT'S
GETTIN' DARK!

FEET —
MOVE!



CRACK!
CARACK!

WHU-
WHUTE
THAT'S
GULP!

CLIPPITY
CLIPPITY
CLIPPITY
CLOP...

WHEEEEEEE!



THET-THET DRIVER!
I'D KNOW THEM
MUSTACHES ANYWHERE—
IT WUZ OLD DRIVER
RACE, YET-YET I SAW
HIM DAID WITH MUN OWN
EYES! THEN
PASSENGERS—
EVERYTHING 'GHOSTS'
GHOSTS—A 'RIDIN'
WITH THUN FULL
MOON!



THE GHOST STAGE THUNDERS DOWN
THE ROAD— RIGHT THROUGH TOWN—

AM I
SEEN'
THINGS?
GHOSTS!

I'M GETTIN' HOME,
GONNA SCRUNCH
UNDER MUN BED
AN' STAY THAR
TILL MORNIN'.



NEXT
MORNIN'!

HIS
DAD,
ALL
RIGHT—
MURDERER!

MUSTA BEEN
JEST ABOUT
THUN TIME THET
GHOST STAGE
CAME A 'RIDIN'
THROUGH TOWN.

I DUNNO
'BOUT YOU
HOMERS, BUT
I'M SELLIN'
EVERYTHIN' I
GOT AN' I'M
GETTIN' OUTA
TOWN!



SOME
MONTHS
LATER—

BANK

EVERY MONTH, ON THUN
NIGHT O' THUN FULL MOON—
THUN SAME THING! THET
GHOST STAGE ROBS THUN
ROADS AN' THAR'S A
MURDER! CAN'T GIT
NOBODY TUN HELP ME!

SOON WON'T BE
ANYBODY LEFT,
SHERIFF, LOOKIT
THET BANK!
EVERYBODY'S
SELLIN' OUT, EVEN
AT A LOSS, SO
THEY KON CLEAR
OUTA TOWN!

IT'S
TERROR,
THAT'S
WHY!



I DONE ALL A MAN KON DO—
CAN'T DO ANYMORE, I'M
GONNA WRITE THUN CHIEF
MARSHAL FER HELP!



A FEW DAYS LATER...

...SO THAT'S IT, REX. I CAN'T FIGHT THIS THING ALONE. AS SOON AS THAT GHOST STAGE COMES A'ROUND THROUGH TOWN, EVERYBODY HITS FER COVER...

WHICH MAKES THE KILLINGS EASIER, EH?

AND TONIGHT THERE'LL BE A FULL MOON!

I CAN TELL YOU THAT THIS RUMBLE PERSON HAS NO INTEREST IN OBSERVING IT!

TONIGHT THUN GHOST STAGE RIDES AGAIN! I'M SHORE GLAD THUN CHIEF SENT YOU, REX!

THAT NIGHT! THE STREETS ARE DARK AND DESERTED. EVERYBODY IS HOME BEHIND LOCKED DOORS—EXCEPT FOR THREE MEN...

WELL, THE SUN'S SET AND THE FULL MOON'S COMING UP.

I G-G-GUESS THUN G-G-GHOST STAGE OUGHTA BE ALONG SOON.

HERE SHE COMES! LOOK TO YOUR GUNS, GENTS!

ISULPT? I CO-CAN'T TAKE IT!

I BEG YOU—MOVE A BIT FASTER, SHERFF!

THEN THAT LEAVES ME... ALL RIGHT, WHOEVER YOU ARE—

FULL UP AND GRAB AIR!

WOW! THESE GHOSTS ARE MIGHTY QUICK ON THE TRIGGER! MAYBE I'LL DO BETTER ON MY HORSE.

I'M GOING AFTER THOSE "SPOOKS"—EVEN IF I HAVE TO CHASE THEM RIGHT INTO THEIR GRAVES!



A FEW HOURS LATER....



A MONTH PASSES. IT IS AGAIN THE NIGHT OF THE FULL MOON. ON BOOT HILL....





GULP!
A REAL
GHOST!

YIIIIIIII! TURN
THIS CONTRAPTION
AROUND, PETE —
LET'S GIT
OUTA HYAR!



WAIT! FEAR NOT
FELLOW-GHOSTS!
COME RIDE WITH ME
THROUGH THE NIGHT
OF DEATH! COME PLAY
IN THE GRAVEYARD!
LET US SWOOP THROUGH
THE CLOUDS AND TOUCH
THE HAUNTED MOON!

GULP! NO THANKS!
SIDDAP, YUH BROKES!

GIT A
MOVE ON,
PETE!

THEY'RE HEADING BACK — GOOD!
I WON'T CATCH THEM YET — I WANT
TO SEE WHERE THEY'RE HEADING.
THINK I'LL "DISAPPEAR" FOR
A WHILE



THE GHOST STAGE THUNDERS BACK
TO THE OLD PUEBLO VILLAGE....



HYAR WE
ARE! GONNA
GIT THIS
BLASTED
MUSTACHE
OFF!

AN'
THIS
WHITE
PAINT!



WE'RE
THROUGH,
BOSS!
GIVE US
OUR PAY
AN' LET
US GIT!

RIGHT! THAT'S
REAL
GHOSTS AFTER
US NOW!
WE'VE HAD
ENOUGH OF
THIS JOB

WHAT?
NONSENSE!



NONSENSE?
NOT AT ALL!



QUICK!
GRAB THE
STAGE —
LET'S GIT
OUT OF
HERE!

NOW
D'YIM
SEE
WHAT
WE
MEAN?

AT DAWN,
IN TOWN...

WELL, IT'S
DAWN, I GUESS
IT'S SAFE
T'UH COME
OUT NOW.

DOWN—AN' THUH
GHOST STAGE AIN'T
COME THROUGH.
THINK MEBBE IT'S
FINISHED HAUNTIN'
US P.



THE GHOST RIDER HAS HERDED HIS
QUARRY INTO TOWN AND NOW HE
SPURS SPECTRE ON.



THIS IS
THE END OF
THE LINE,
FELLOW
GHOSTS!



LET US
SEE IF YOU
CAN FLY
LIKE ~~REAL~~
GHOSTS!



COME
OUT,
CITIZENS!
COME
OUT AND
SEE
YOUR
"GHOSTS!"

HEY,
THEM
AIN'T
GHOSTS
AT ALL!

THET
HOMBRES..
HE'S
ELMER
BIGGS—
THUH
TOWN
BANKER.

I DID IT. I STARTED
THE WHOLE BUSINESS.
I FIGURED TO SCARE
EVERYBODY INTO
SELLING ME THEIR
PROPERTY CHEAP
AND MOVING OUT. IN
TIME, I THOUGHT I
COULD OWN THE
WHOLE TOWN...



WELL
THEY'RE
IT! I
RECKON
YOU
HOMBRES
WON'T BE
BELIEVIN'
IN GHOSTS
ANYMORE!

OH YEAH? THEN
WHO OR WHAT
WAS THE MAN—OR
THING—THAT
CAPTURED
THESE HOMBRES?

!GULP!

